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It's farmer vs. federal agency

ELKTON — William Spry says if he harvests his wheat as he has been doing for decades, he will be jailed. Officials for the Environmental Protection Agency, the group Mr. Spry levels his accusation against, say that would not happen.

The bone of contention between the 84-year-old farmer and the EPA is a 50-acre portion of the 400-acre farm that was declared a Superfund site earlier this year.

The news that the acreage was contaminated with military ordnance was no surprise to Spry.

"I've known that stuff has been there for almost 60 years, but no one ever said anything about it until now," Mr. Spry said.

"Now I've got a field full of wheat that they let me plant last fall, but they won't let me harvest this summer," Mr. Spry told the *Cecil Whig*.

He said he has been pulling small hunks of rusted metal out of the farm since he started renting the property 30 years ago.

Arthur O'Connell, chief of the Maryland Department of the Environment's Superfund Program, said his agency has known for decades that a large pit of military-grade munitions was buried north of Elkton. But exactly where the disposal pit was not known until the Department of Defense found documents giving an approximate location.

Commonly referred to in the industry as a "firehole," the pit was a product of Triumph Industries, a World War II-era munitions factory.

Charles Fitzsimmons, the EPA's onsite coordinator and the man who ordered the section of farm closed, said there is little Mr. Spry or anyone can do.